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ABSTRACT

This collection of abstracts is part of a continuing series providing information on recent doctoral dissertations. The 14 titles deal with a variety of topics, including the following: (1) the relationship between the syntactical complexity of expository writing and reading comprehension levels of community college students, (2) fluent and nonfluent readers' use of strategies in text comprehension, (3) the organization and effectiveness of community college reading programs, (4) the social context of adult reading instruction, (5) a computer-managed tutorial reading system, (6) the effects of format and number of arguments on reading comprehension of college undergraduates, (7) the effect of a reading improvement program on the college student, and (8) schema modification as one aspect of reading comprehension. (HTH)

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Abstracts of the following dissertations are included in this collection:

Conlin, Mary Louise
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SYNTACTICAL COMPLEXITY OF EXPOSITORY WRITING AND READING COMPREHENSION LEVELS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

Fitzgerald, Mary Louise
INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN LETTERS AND SCIENCE: THE IDEA, THE PROGRAM, THE METHOD OF TEACHING

Gruen, Elizabeth Ross
A COMPARISON OF FLUENT AND NON-FLUENT READERS' USE OF STRATEGIES IN TEXT COMPREHENSION AS MEASURED BY RECONSTRUCTION OF THE MACRO-STRUCTURE

Helm, Phoebe Knight
THE EFFECTS OF PRACTICE AND COACHING ON FIRST YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS' ACCEPTANCE OF CLOZE TESTS, TEST ANXIETY AND CLOZE TEST PERFORMANCE

Jordan, John Edison Inman, III
THE EFFECTS UPON READING COMPREHENSION OF PROVIDING DEFINED TECHNICAL TERMS WITHIN A READING PASSAGE TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CONSTRUCTION STUDENTS IN MACON, GEORGIA

Kohlmiller, Darrell Herman
A STUDY OF THE ORGANIZATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE READING PROGRAMS

McDermott, Peter
THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF ADULT READING INSTRUCTION

Menaldino, Sharon Rose
THE EFFECTS OF DOGMATISM, SEX AND COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT ON THE COMPREHENSION OF CONTROVERSIAL MATERIALS

Pearce, Daniel Loren
THE EFFECT OF SELECTED DISCOURSE VARIABLES ON THE VISUAL PROCESSING OF LEFT- AND RIGHT-EMBEDDED SENTENCES BY COMPETENT ADULT READERS

Richter, Sharon Jane Frank
A COMPUTER-MANAGED TUTORIAL READING SYSTEM

Stone, Diana Joy
THE EFFECTS OF FORMAT AND NUMBER OF ARGUMENTS ON READING COMPREHENSION OF COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATES

Watson, Nancy Sue Mitchell
THE EFFECT OF A READING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM ON THE COLLEGE STUDENT

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SCHEMA MODIFICATION AS ONE ASPECT OF READING COMPREHENSION: A COMPARISON OF STRATEGIES OF ADULT PROFICIENT AND NON-PROFICIENT READERS

Whitt, Mary Frances
READING COMPREHENSION: AN ANALYSIS FOR DEVELOPMENTAL READING PROGRAMS IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SYNTACTICAL COMPLEXITY OF EXPOSITORY WRITING AND READING COMPREHENSION LEVELS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

Order No. 8118796

CONLIN, MARY LOUISE, PH D. *Case Western Reserve University*, 1981. 112pp.

The study was designed to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the syntactical complexity of students' expository writing and their reading comprehension levels. The study also investigated the relationship between the two expository writing samples used as the test instruments: a controlled sample and a free sample.

The subjects were drawn from students registered in developmental reading and writing courses and in the entry-level freshman composition course at the inner city and suburban campuses of a community college of 27,000 students, located in a large midwestern urban area. The two writing samples were based on a prior reading of a short essay, "The Four Extras," by Richard W. Burkhardt. Writing Sample 1, the controlled expository sample, was a response to the question, "What are the four extras available to a college student?" The question required the subjects to summarize the main ideas, or major points, of the essay. Writing Sample 2, the free expository sample, was a response to the question "Of the functions mentioned in the essay, which do you consider most important? Why?" The Reading Comprehension Test is one of a language battery, called the Descriptive Test of Language Skills, developed by the Educational Testing Service for community college populations. The test yields subscores for Main Ideas (15 points), Direct Statements (13 points), and Inferences (17 points), for a possible raw score of 45.

The findings of the study indicate a significant relationship between the syntactical complexity of expository writing and reading comprehension levels, with the results being highly influenced by the relation between the syntactical complexity of Writing Sample 1 (controlled expository writing) and the comprehension measure for Main Ideas. The hypotheses that there was a significant relationship between Writing Sample 1 and Inferences, between Writing Sample 2 (free expository writing) and Inferences, and between Writing Sample 1 and Writing Sample 2 were not supported.

The implications of the findings are that high reading comprehension tends to occur with high written syntactical complexity production in controlled expository writing; that low syntactical complexity production, whether in a controlled or a free expository writing sample, and low comprehension tend to occur together; but that low syntactical complexity production and high reading comprehension may occur together, particularly when a free writing sample is used as the syntactical complexity measure. The findings further indicate that syntactical complexity production tends to be greater in free than in controlled expository writing. Based on the findings, it appears that written syntactical complexity production is related to reading comprehension but that subjects may be able to comprehend materials written at a markedly higher syntactical complexity level than that they can produce.

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN LETTERS AND SCIENCE: THE IDEA, THE PROGRAM, THE METHOD OF TEACHING

Order No. 8113030

FITZGERALD, MARY LOUISE, PH.D. *University of California, Berkeley*, 1980. 352pp.

Interdisciplinary Studies in Letters and Science is a five quarter program in the liberal arts designed as a context for the development of a special method of teaching. The program was established on the campus of Chabot College in Hayward, California, in 1967 and continues to flourish there in 1980. This study is a report of the genesis and development of the program and an explication of the special method of teaching by one of the original codesigners who also served as a faculty member for many years.

The program, Interdisciplinary Studies in Letters and Science, enrolls 150 students and is staffed by five permanent faculty members for each program span. The curriculum gives equal emphasis to each of the five academic areas offered: English, humanities, social science, mathematics/physics, and natural science. Each discipline is studied through an examination of five representative primary sources chosen by the appropriate faculty member according to strict criteria. During each quarter, the disciplines are studied in sequence; each work is addressed for a full two-week period without interruption by any other subject matter. Interdisciplinary relationships among these works are not forced through any thematic organization but are allowed to occur naturally through the simple juxtaposition of ideas, documents, and works of art.

The primary educational objective is to provide an introduction to the life of serious college study rather than a preparation for specialized study in any given field. Therefore, particular attention has been paid to the creation of an environment of communal learning and fellowship through such means as a common schedule for all, common facilities for study and conversation, a variety of arrangements for teaching and learning ranging from all-member assemblies to smaller discussion groups, and opportunities for individual study. A close tutorial relationship between students and faculty is inherent in the program design.

The organizing principle of the program, however, and its true innovation, is the special method of teaching. The instructional method is characterized as an objective and analytic approach to single works in the various disciplines of the arts and sciences. The purpose of its use is to give students both the confidence and the skills to approach any work in any field without dependence on authority for an introduction. Common principles of inquiry are assumed for these first independent investigations. Students learn to rely on the "language" of the discipline as their guide; color and line, tonal motif, hypothesis and demonstration, the associative communication of metaphor, and others. Skills are developed through a sequence of steps beginning with analysis of structure, moving to close textual analysis and then to an introduction to interpretation of graphic, literary, and mathematical symbols. The expected outcome for all students is mastery of the specific content of the work; the preferred outcome for most students is a deeper understanding of the implications of the work achieved by individual improvisations in the system of inquiry.

The intellectual and pedagogical rationale for this system of teaching are given in detail, as well as simulations of typical student-faculty inquiries into major works of Western thought. Although emphasis has been given to a description and an explication of the process within the context of the program, Interdisciplinary Studies in Letters and Science, the presentation includes suggestions for its adaptation to individual courses in the more traditional college setting.

A COMPARISON OF FLUENT AND NON-FLUENT READERS' USE OF STRATEGIES IN TEXT COMPREHENSION AS MEASURED BY RECONSTRUCTION OF THE MACRO-STRUCTURE

Order No. 8122950

GRUEN, ELIZABETH ROSS, ED.D. *Columbia University Teachers College*, 1981. 190pp. Sponsor: Professor Anne McKillop

The purpose of this study was to identify reasoning strategies used in text comprehension by fluent and non-fluent college readers, and to relate each groups' strategy usage to: (1) reader proficiency, (2) accuracy in the test task, reconstructing the macro-structure, (3) the presence or absence of a goal, and (4) knowledge of certain additive, adversative, and causal cohesive elements. To identify the strategies, the process of protocol analysis was used, a means of directly investigating the verbalization of what the reader is thinking while he is solving a problem.

The sample included 40 college subjects enrolled in a two year public liberal arts college; twenty were assigned to the fluent reader group, and twenty to the non-fluent group, as determined by placement either above the 65th percentile or placement below the 35th percentile, respectively, on the reading placement test for the college. An instrument was designed to satisfy the need for a comprehension task that would provide data for protocol analysis, leading to strategy identification and information about the relation between the strategies applied and reading comprehension. The instrument comprised: (1) two different sets of directions for reading the passage, with one set designated *goal present*, in that the subject was directed to read for an explicit purpose, and the second set designated *goal absent*, in that the subject was directed merely to read the passage; (2) a reading passage of 1000 words from an eighth grade history text; (3) directions for tape recording the subjects protocol and three sample audio-tapes to help in familiarizing the subject with the task in verbalizing his thought processes; and (4) a summary whose sentence components had been representing the passage macro-structure, to be recorded as the test task. The test was administered individually to each subject.

Results from the process of protocol analysis led to the

identification of 29 reasoning strategies which were defined behaviorally. Most of the strategies that emerged from the data pertain to two of four major categories, defined as *use of macro-structure*, or *use of micro-structure*. In applying the *use of macro-structure* strategy, the student made a choice in the reordering task based on the gist or global meaning of the passage, whereas, in applying the *use of micro-structure* strategy, the student made a choice based on the micro-level of meaning.

The chi-square statistic treated the frequency data for strategy usage, and the t-test was applied to test for significant differences between reader groups' mean scores on the test task reordering the macro-structure, as well as significant differences in mean number of successful strategy applications. The results of the statistical analysis seemed to point out that the pattern of use in reasoning strategies for fluent readers is significantly different from that of non-fluent readers', and to provide evidence that fluent readers appear to make use of macro-structure in comprehension in a way that non-fluent do not. Fluent readers were also found to be successful in strategy use significantly more often ($p < .05$), and more successful in the test task of reordering the macro-structure ($p < .01$). The goal condition was related to successful strategy use, too; fluent readers in the *goal absent* condition demonstrated success significantly more often than non-fluent readers ($p < .05$). Fluent readers used strategies related to the adversative connectives, "even though," "however," or "nevertheless" significantly more often than non-fluent readers ($p < .05$).

THE EFFECTS OF PRACTICE AND COACHING ON FIRST YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS' ACCEPTANCE OF CLOZE TESTS, TEST ANXIETY AND CLOZE TEST PERFORMANCE

Order No. 8114079

HELM, PHOEBE KNIGHT, ED.D. *University of Kentucky*, 1980. 181pp. Director: Dr. Earl F. Rankin

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of practice and coaching on first year college students' acceptance of cloze tests on measures of reading comprehension. Since test acceptability is assumed to be related to test anxiety and performance on tests, the effects of practice and coaching on these variables and the interrelationships among these variables was also studied. It was believed that cloze reading tests have considerable practical advantages for classroom teachers. The rather limited use of such instruments in the classroom, despite years of research showing high levels of validity, was thought to be due to the lack of acceptance by students because of the difference between the format of cloze tests and conventional tests of reading.

Subjects in this study were selected from 700 freshman students enrolled in a reading improvement course in a large technical institute. Practice and coaching treatments were randomly assigned to the 138 subjects within several intact classes, thus forming two treatment groups and a control group for this post-test-only control group design. Both treatments were implemented through written materials and instructions without any oral communication with the experimenter.

The practice group treatment consisted of a short cloze test followed on the next page by the original passage. This arrangement enabled subjects to score the practice test themselves by comparing their answers to the actual words the auther used. The coaching treatment focused on the reading and thinking strategies necessary to the successful completion of cloze tests and on building an understanding of the rationale for such tests. Subjects in the coaching group were given several examples of cloze items with written explanations for the correct response. They were then given a short cloze test followed by an explanation of the reasons many blanks could not be filled in correctly. The acceptability of relatively low percentage scores as indicating adequate reading comprehension was explained.

Three tests, *Cloze Test of Reading Comprehension*, an *Acceptability Questionnaire* and the *Anxiety Differential*, were used as measures of dependent variables. The first two tests were constructed by the author.

No effects of practice or coaching were found for either the total group or for male and female subjects. A negative relationship ($r = .42$) was found between test anxiety and test acceptability for the control group. This relationship held for both male and female subjects. Additional analyses suggested that both treatments may have reduced the tendancy for subjects with high anxiety to report less test acceptability and that the practice procedures used in this study may have enhanced the negative relationship between test anxiety and cloze test performance rather than reducing it.

The failure of both treatments to produce changes in levels of acceptability, anxiety, and test performance may have been due to the use of printed instructions and treatments only because of the necessity to administer different treatments within intact classroom units. It is suggested that future research on this topic use other treatment modalities. Although this study failed to produce evidence concerning effective ways of improving students' acceptance of cloze tests, important reasons exist for continued study of this topic. Cloze tests have too many advantages for the classroom teacher to remain primarily a research tool for students of language and reading.

THE EFFECTS UPON READING COMPREHENSION OF PROVIDING DEFINED TECHNICAL TERMS WITHIN A READING PASSAGE TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CONSTRUCTION STUDENTS IN MACON, GEORGIA

Order No. 8115117

JORDAN, JOHN EDISON INMAN, III, PH.D. *The Ohio State University*, 1981. 151pp. Adviser: Professor Dewey A. Adams

Technical terms and phrases in vocational education textbooks can cause confusion for the students. This is especially true when these terms or phrases have different meanings outside the study of vocational education.

This research study attempted to provide an answer to the following question: Does providing a student with defined technical terms within a reading passage increase the level of comprehension of selected textbook materials? Specifically, the purposes of this research were: (1) to determine the effects of providing defined technical terms within a reading passage on the level of comprehension, (2) to determine if any interaction between treatments and levels of reading ability exists, and (3) to determine the effects of providing a glossary of technical terms at the beginning of a reading passage, on the level of comprehension.

To accomplish these purposes, Unit 3 of *Modern Carpentry* by Willis H. Wagner was chosen as the reading passage. This unit was selected because it contained enough technical terms and phrases to address the problem identified for this study. The level of readability for this unit was estimated, using the Fry Readability Graph, at approximately an eleventh grade level of readability.

A fifty-item cloze test was constructed over the unit. In addition, three treatments were developed (placement of defined technical terms). The three treatments were: Method A--Standard Reading Passage, Method B--Standard Reading Passage with a Glossary on the front of the material, and Method C--Standard Reading Passage with the Glossary built into the Reading Passage. After reading one of the three methods (treatments), each student turned in that reading and took a second reading from the teacher's desk. This second reading was the same material (standard reading passage) but, this reading had the cloze test applied to it.

The subjects used in this study were tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade first and second year vocational construction students in Macon, Georgia. A total of 99 male students were involved. The data resulting from the cloze tests were subjected to an analysis of variance.

The findings of the study led to the conclusion that those students who had access to the defined technical terms and phrases performed significantly better on the cloze test than those students who did not have access to the defined technical terms and phrases.

From the results of this study, it is recommended that teachers select textbooks that contain a glossary. In addition, it is recommended that teachers teach vocabulary to students.

A STUDY OF THE ORGANIZATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE READING PROGRAMS

Order No. 8120626

KOHLMILLER, DARRELL HERMAN, PH.D. *Saint Louis University*, 1980. 88pp.

The purpose of this study was to identify the most successful community college reading programs and gather the most successful of their methods and materials into a concise and well-organized collection to be used as a reference for community college reading teachers.

Community colleges were surveyed at the national, state and local levels. Survey questions were asked about the following components of each program: (1) objectives and goals, (2) type and duration of each reading course offered by the college, (3) materials and teaching strategies that were most effective, (4) characteristics of students in the programs, (5) qualifications and training of faculty, including inservice opportunities, (6) amount and type of credit given for each course, and (7) evaluation procedures used to determine the programs effectiveness. On the local level, statistical analysis was used to determine the effectiveness of the reading program by comparing grades after two years of college of students who took the reading course(s) to the grades of similar students who did not take reading.

The survey showed that there was a wide range of classes offered in terms of duration of course, amount of credit given, and structure of the course itself. However, there were some characteristics found in all the programs. For example, all of them stressed flexibility and individualization. In most of the programs, the reading faculty were well-trained. Most held Master's degrees or higher and all had considerable experience.

Students in the various programs shared a number of common characteristics whether they lived in the inner city of a Metropolitan area, the middle-class suburbs, or in a rural area. They had very low self-concepts, came from culturally poor homes, were not intellectually oriented, were generally low in verbal skills, failed to see the value of acquiring verbal skills, and had difficulty seeing long-range goals clearly. Other common characteristics are described in detail in the study.

Lists of instructional materials and equipment used in the various programs were compiled and listed in tabular form with authors and publishers names and addresses for quick reference. In addition, the most widely used reading tests were listed. Many of the colleges used one form of a standardized test for placement and an alternate form for post-testing.

The survey found several areas that needed further development. Better articulation within the college and among colleges is needed by the people responsible for the success of college reading, from the college board members to the reading specialist in the classroom. In-service and more advanced college courses at the universities are needed for the reading teachers' professional growth. And, finally, the content area teachers must become more involved in reading programs and what these programs can do for community college students. The content area teachers must be aware of assistance they can receive from the reading specialist which may help them in teaching their own classes. In the community college, the teaching of reading must become everybody's business if the student is to have the best possible chance for success.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF ADULT READING INSTRUCTION

Order No. 8118755

MCDERMOTT, PETER, ED.D. *State University of New York at Albany*, 1981. 225pp.

This study was conducted to describe and explain the social context of an adult reading class. Qualitative research methodology was used because of its appropriateness to the study's descriptive and explanatory purpose. A class of adults with minimum reading skills was studied over a five and a half month period during which transcripts made from audio recordings of participants' verbal interactions, field notes taken through a participant observation research strategy, interviews and specimen records were collected and analyzed.

Theory for the study was derived from literature in adult education, sociolinguistics and anthropology. Adult educators have frequently argued that adult students should not be treated as children in the instructional process. Adult literacy programs have been criticized for confronting their learners with the same interactional structures that exist in the elementary and secondary schools. Anthropological and sociolinguistic research has provided descriptions of the social structures that exist in the elementary and secondary school; such research has demonstrated that the social context of classrooms mediates student learning, and that the social relationships, roles and identities of classroom members are reveal_d by the ways they speak with one another.

As found in the discourse structure of the classroom, this adult reading class contained a social structure similar to the elementary and sceondary school classroom. A tri-part discourse pattern where the teacher initiated and evaluated student replies existed. There were some differences in discourse strategies that indicated that the teacher was sensitive to the students' adult identities. It was found that the teacher often formulated the reasons for student incorrect replies and used a categorization label which evoked normative concepts concerning instructional activities that were appropriate for adult students.

The discourse structures of this adult reading class did not reflect the theoretical positions of adult educators who proposed that adult students should be initiators and questioners of their own learning. This finding was explained, however, as a reasonable decision by the teacher when given the students' previous school histories, their socio-cultural background, and some of their behavioral characteristics in the classroom. It was explained that the educational ideology of the instructional material may have affected the classroom's interactional patterns.

THE EFFECTS OF DOGMATISM, SEX AND COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT ON THE COMPREHENSION OF CONTROVERSIAL MATERIALS

Order No. 8115951

MENALDINO, SHARON ROSE, ED.D. *Temple University*, 1981. 129pp. Chairperson: Dr. Elizabeth Davis

There were several purposes for the present investigation. Stated in the form of questions, the first dealt with how dogmatism, open- and closed-mindedness, affected the ability of college students to read controversial materials critically. The second question arose as to whether differences in the degree of dogmatism, open- and closed-mindedness, occurred between students attending a secular university and those attending a religious college, and consequently, did this effect their ability to read controversial materials. The third question related to the effect of sex difference upon the ability to read critically particular controversial materials (i.e., the abortion controversy).

Hypotheses. (1) The way a person comprehends emotionally sensitive materials will be affected by his degree of dogmatism. (2) Between students in a secular university and a religious college there will be differences in comprehension scores obtained from emotionally sensitive materials. (3) There will be an interaction between the type of environment and dogmatism in comprehension scores obtained from the selections read. (4) Sex differences will affect the comprehension scores on emotionally sensitive materials read. (5) There will be a significant interaction between the type of comprehension errors and the degree of dogmatism.

Procedures. Sixty-eight students in a secular university and 76 students in two religious colleges were used for this study. All these students were administered the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale and three stimulus selections (pro-life, neutral and pro-choice). The results were obtained by using a five-way analysis of variance with repeated measures. Since repeated measures were used, the Geisser-Greenhouse conservative F was calculated as a correction factor.

Results and Conclusion. According to the findings, Hypothesis I was rejected. There was no significant interaction between open- and closed-minded students' comprehension of emotionally sensitive and neutral materials. Hypothesis II, however, was not rejected. Upon analyzing the comprehension scores on the basis of the relationship between controversial materials and the two educational institutions, there was a significant difference in the students' performance. The religious group achieved higher comprehension scores on the pro-life and neutral selections than on the pro-choice article. The secular group, however, achieved higher comprehension scores on the neutral selection and maintained similar comprehension scores on the pro-choice and pro-life passages. There was no significant difference between students in the secular and religious groups and their comprehension scores on the neutral selection. Contrary to hypothesis III, closed-minded students from both the secular and religious groups achieved higher comprehension scores on the neutral passage than on the pro-choice and pro-life selections. Open-minded students from both groups did not achieve similar comprehension scores on all the three stimulus selections. Hypothesis IV was rejected. Both males and females achieved higher comprehension scores on the neutral selection

than on the pro-choice and pro-life passages. Hypothesis V was also rejected. Open- as well as closed-minded students obtained more comprehension errors on the inferential and critical reading items than the factual items. Additional significant interactions that were not hypothesized were then analyzed.

The investigator concluded from all the findings that dogmatism appeared not to be an important factor in affecting students' comprehension scores on emotionally sensitive selections. However, the type of reading material and the educational background of the students were important variables in showing differences in the students' comprehension scores.

THE EFFECT OF SELECTED DISCOURSE VARIABLES ON THE VISUAL PROCESSING OF LEFT- AND RIGHT-EMBEDDED SENTENCES BY COMPETENT ADULT READERS

Order No. 8117259

PEARCE, DANIEL LOREN, PH.D. *Michigan State University*, 1981. 129pp.

Purpose of the Study. The purpose of the study was to obtain and analyze data concerning the visual processing of competent adult readers while reading sentences within paragraphs to discover whether the processing of those sentences varied as a result of thematic factors within the preceding paragraph and syntactic structure within the target sentences. The study focused on the processing of left-embedded and right-embedded structures in foregrounded paragraphs, backgrounded paragraphs, and inferred paragraphs. The behaviors measured were number of total movements, number of forward fixations, number of regressions, duration of forward fixations, duration of regressions, duration of gaze, and total reading time.

Materials. Materials used in this study consisted of thirty-six separate paragraphs. Each paragraph was constructed around a target sentence. There were six target sentences, each of which had a left-embedded form and a right-embedded form. The six pairs of target sentences (left-embedded form and right-embedded form) were of the same length (nine words), were of active voice, and employed no dependent clauses with the exception of the target embedding. Each of the target sentences was set in three conditions of paragraphs. The first condition explicitly introduced, thematized, and foregrounded the information in the target sentence (called the foregrounded condition). Within a foregrounded paragraph, the target sentence always appeared on the eighth line. The second condition of paragraphs was identical to the foregrounded paragraph; however, two sentences of semantically neutral filler to background the concepts in the target sentence were introduced immediately prior to the target sentence (called the backgrounded condition). Within the backgrounded paragraphs, the target sentence always appeared on the tenth line. The third condition consisted of paragraphs that were coherent in nature: however, no information within the target sentence was implicitly introduced prior to the target sentence (called the inferred condition).

Population and Procedures. The sample subjects used in this study consisted of thirty-six volunteer, adult, university graduate students. All participants were native English speakers. Subjects read seven selections silently: an EDL paragraph; a foregrounded, left-enbedded paragraph; a foregrounded, right-embedded paragraph; and an inferred, right-embedded paragraph. Their eye movements were recorded with the EDL Biometrics Reading Eye II.

Findings. Data concerning the visual processing behaviors were tested with analysis of variance. Statistically significant differences were found among the six conditions for each of the seven visual processing behaviors. Each of the conditions was then compared with each of the other conditions using Tukey's *post hoc* procedures.

Analysis of the data indicated that competent adult readers made statistically significant behavioral adjustments in their reading to accommodate either the information structure of the material or the syntactic structures of the sentence being read.

Implications of the Study. The results of the study indicated the following: (1) An examination of the means for the areas of visual behavior within the six conditions support the interactionist theories of reading comprehensions. The means for the visual processing behaviors were consistent in difficulty when they were rank ordered. The means indicated that the left-embedded syntactic structures in the inferred condition always presented the most processing difficulty. The structures with the lowest means were always the right-embedded structures in the foregrounded condition. (2) The results of the study supported the position that the given-new strategy is a microprocess in sentence comprehension. (3) The results of the study do not appear to support the hypothesis that special psychological status is given to the current topic of a discourse.

A COMPUTER-MANAGED TUTORIAL READING SYSTEM

Order No. 8126856

RICHTER, SHARON JANE FRANK, ED.D. *The University of Alabama*, 1981. 222pp.

The purpose of this study was to develop the Programmed Strategies for Reading Instruction (PSRI) system, a Computer-Managed Instructional (CMI) system, to be used in the tutorial setting of the Belser-Parton Reading Center at The University of Alabama. Four major areas were investigated: (a) computers in education, (b) tests included in the assessment battery, (c) authorities in the field of reading, and (d) the computer programming of the UNIVAC 1100/60.

A prescription data sheet, a student data log, and an operations manual were constructed and a sample program run conducted. In the study proper, the five tests comprising the assessment battery (the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised, the Sucher-Allred Reading Placement Inventory, the St. Louis Spelling Test, and Dreier Phonics Criterion Test of Ninety-Nine Phoneme-Grapheme Correspondences, and the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests) were analyzed to determine the specific reading skill or skill area tested. Prescriptions for these skills were then written and programmed onto the UNIVAC 1100/60 computer.

Analysis of the tests yielded an approximate total of 497 reading skills divided into 120 skill areas. Each skill was listed on a separate prescription data sheet. Reading texts by authorities in the field were surveyed to determine the best possible remedial reading activities for each skill tested. These remedial reading activities or prescriptions were recorded on the appropriate prescription data sheet. Demographic data were collected from the client information application and recorded on the student data log. Scores and information needed for expectancy calculations were also recorded on the student data log.

This information was then programmed onto the University's UNIVAC 1100/60 computer. The program consists of one main program with six subroutines. The program contains a direct access file allowing the computer to go directly to the correct prescription without having to read each line preceding the one desired. The program processes 15 students during a period of approximately 30 minutes.

The operations manual was developed to allow personnel associated with the Belser-Parton Reading Center easier access to the PSRI system. The manual was constructed in conversational form and can easily be followed allowing personnel access to the system without prior computer knowledge.

PSRI was developed along general CMI guidelines; however, it is unique in the following ways: (a) PSRI deals with a wide range of specific skills and prescriptions forming large data bases, (b) it selects prescriptions based on the computer analysis of those areas where the most mistakes were made, (c) it was developed for a particular tutorial reading program, (d) the tutors maintain control of the teaching process by choosing prescriptions printed by the computer as they prepare individualized lessons for their students, and (e) PSRI deals only with those reading skills accessed by the instruments comprising the assessment battery used in the Belser-Parton Reading Center.

Conclusions were made concerning the PSRI system. It was noted that the computer can be programmed successfully to perform certain diagnostic and prescriptive tasks associated with the teaching of reading in a clinical tutorial setting. To ensure quality, prescriptions accessed by the computer were based upon recommendations of authorities in the field of reading. The printout produced by the computer was concise, accurate, and easily accessible for use. It allowed for continuous notations regarding strategies. The PSRI saved preparation time and allowed the tutor to spend additional time with the student. It was noted that the assessment battery was not inclusive of all reading skills at all levels. An important recommendation was that the data bases of the prescriptions of PSRI should be reviewed at least every two years in order to accommodate the latest writings and research in the field of reading.

THE EFFECTS OF FORMAT AND NUMBER OF ARGUMENTS ON READING COMPREHENSION OF COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATES

Order No. 8120079

STONE, DIANA JOY, PH.D. *Fordham University*, 1981. 191pp. Mentor: Lillian Restaino-Baumann

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of varying the format and the number of propositional arguments in text on the comprehension of college undergraduates. Passages written in standard format text were altered into a list format so that sentence components were presented on successive lines of print. In addition, passages contained either few or many arguments within propositions. Comprehension was measured by the number of propositions a subject was able to recall in writing.

The theoretical foundation for the study was based upon Kintsch's theory that information can be represented propositionally, and that comprehension of text can be altered by the number of different arguments contained within propositions. It is further based upon the research findings of Frase, and Schwartz, Fisher, and Frase that text meaningfully segmented into a list format is more comprehensible than is standard format text.

One hundred twenty college students attending Montclair State College in New Jersey, who scored one-half a standard deviation above, or one-half a standard deviation below, the mean on the reading comprehension subtest of *The Diagnostic Reading Test: Survey Section* were selected as subjects for this study and assigned into two groups, according to reading ability. The subjects were then randomly assigned from within the larger groups of skilled and unskilled readers, to the experimental groups.

The experimental materials consisted of a booklet containing four passages, two written in standard format text and two in list format text. One passage in each format contained few arguments and one passage contained many arguments. The passages were alternated with blank pages for subjects' written recalls of the text. A proposition text base of 30 propositions was used to generate each of the passages. The passages written in standard format text were typographically manipulated into a list format, so that sentence components appeared on successive lines of print. The four passage conditions were: standard format text with many arguments within propositions, standard format text with few arguments within propositions, list format text with many arguments within propositions, list format text with few arguments within propositions.

A three-way analysis of variance with repeated measures on two factors was performed on the number of propositions recalled with text format, number of arguments, and reading ability as the independent variables. The *F* ratios for reading ability, format, and arguments and the interaction between format and ability were significant at the .01 level.

The findings indicated that: (a) scores for list format text groups were significantly higher than scores for standard format text groups; (b) fewer arguments within propositions in passages yielded significantly higher recall scores than passages written with many arguments; (c) the scores of skilled readers were significantly higher for list format text than for standard format text.

A major conclusion was that skilled readers were able to utilize list format text to facilitate comprehension, while unskilled readers did not gain any advantage from the manipulated text. In addition, the number of arguments presented in a passage was a critical element affecting comprehension. The findings of the current study suggest that it is easier for subjects to process, comprehend, and recall information in passages written with few arguments than for those passages written with many arguments. It is further suggested that text written with many arguments, despite a manipulated format, overloads even the skilled readers' ability to comprehend.

THE EFFECT OF A READING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM ON THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Order No. 8122341

WATSON, NANCY SUE MITCHELL, ED.D. *University of Colorado at Boulder*, 1981. 125pp. Director: Associate Professor Philip DiStefano

This study was undertaken to analyze the changes that occurred in reading and study skills for students enrolled in a college reading improvement course. Data that were examined included student test scores on reading rate, comprehension, vocabulary, study skills and attitude. Student interviews, questionnaire responses, and other naturalistic data were also collected to further analyze student skill development in a college reading improvement course.

The research was conducted during the fall 1980 semester at Metropolitan State College in Denver, Colorado. Sixty-four students that had enrolled in a college reading improvement course, Reading 104, were used as the experimental group. Their entry level skills were pretested using the *McGraw Hill Basic Skills Series* tests on reading rate, comprehension and vocabulary. A self-report survey was also used to pretest student study skills' proficiency and attitude towards success in school. After 15 weeks of instruction in reading, vocabulary, and study skills, posttesting was administered to the students. A control group of 57 students went through the same test procedures as the experimental group but they did not receive any formal training in reading, vocabulary, or study skills.

A multivariate analysis of main treatment effect was done using the MANOVA computer program of SPSS. The independent variables, pretest scores, underwent an analysis of covariance with the dependent variables, posttest scores. The main treatment effect was considered to be a composite of the following five dependent variables: (1) reading rate, (2) comprehension, (3) vocabulary, (4) study skills, and (5) attitude. In addition to an analysis of main treatment effect, an independent analysis on skill development was performed for each of the five dependent variables. The personological variables of age-group and sex of the student were also examined in this study to determine significance on skill development.

The analysis of experimental data found that participation in a reading improvement program did result in significant posttest score changes. Specifically, students were found to have made significant improvements in reading rate, vocabulary, and study skills when compared to the control group. Changes for the experimental group, however, were not significant in reading comprehension or attitude towards success. The age and sex of the student were also not found to have a significant relationship with cognitive skill development. However, sex of the student was significant in the analysis of attitude. The experimental group women were found to have significantly higher attitude scores than the men.

An evaluation of the naturalistic data confirmed much of the quantitative data. Students enrolled in the college reading improvement class reported very positive perceptions about the course. Most students expressed beliefs that the course had been valuable to them in the development of reading rate, study skills and comprehension. A typical student comment was, "With what I've learned in this class I can effectively carry three jobs, two varsity sports and improve my GPA" (grade point average).

The results of this study indicated that reading, vocabulary, and study skill development was enhanced when students participated in a college reading improvement course. Additionally, the students' perceptions of the course were that it was valuable and very applicable to other college coursework.

SCHEMA MODIFICATION AS ONE ASPECT OF READING COMPREHENSION: A COMPARISON OF STRATEGIES OF ADULT PROFICIENT AND NON-PROFICIENT READERS

Order No. 8120706

WHITE, JANE HELEN, PH.D. *Southern Illinois University at Carbondale*, 1980. 118pp. Major Professors: Billy Dixon, Diane DeFord

This descriptive study was an attempt to analyze in-process comprehension. Within the design, subjects were asked to create a story schema from a list of commonly used words (i.e., pins, cleats, cloth), and then to read a passage of said words which contained clausal cues indicating verbalization points. Due to the specific use of these vocabulary items within the passage, the readers tended to predict a schema which did not match the actual context met (a sailing passage). Then the readers were asked to recall what they had read. At each point within this design (list, passage, retelling), the thoughts and problems encountered when reading as well as the recall of passage information were carefully recorded in order to describe and analyze in-process comprehension. The major data source for comprehending information and schema interaction resided in the reading protocols and retelling transcripts.

The research population consisted of twenty readers, ten proficient and ten non-proficient adults. There were five males and five females in each proficiency group. All students were enrolled in a southern Illinois junior college.

Specific areas of interest within this study were: (1) the number and characteristics of the strategies used to comprehend the passage as revealed through the protocols; (2) the effect of schema instantiation on the number and characteristics of strategies used, the amount of information remembered, and the organization of that information.

The tape recordings of the protocols were transcribed by the researcher, matching each protocol with the clause of the text to which it referred. Each protocol was described as to the strategy or unit of text information employed within it, using the taxonomy derived from the data. The retelling transcripts were propositionalized to match the text base propositions of the passage.

While there were obvious differences in the number of strategies used in the proficient, non-proficient, male and female categories, none of these differences was statistically significant. Proficient readers did use almost twice as many strategies as non-proficient readers, but this was not statistically significant. The differences on the level of strategies used (word, sentence, or passage) were also non-significant statistically. Schema instantiation, however, proved a crucial step in comprehension. Schema instantiation occurred significantly earlier for proficient readers and for female readers. Proficient readers cued in by clause 7.7 on the average; non-proficient readers averaged clause number 19. Females cued in by clause 9.2, while males cued in by clause 17.5. All readers used more strategies after schema instantiation than before, although the level of their strategy usage was not statistically different. Proficient readers recalled more information during their retellings, but all readers recounted more information after the context was clear than before.

Readers were characterized from a univariate analysis of their taxonomic classification usages. Proficient readers varied from non-proficient readers in their use of maintaining the contract to respond to the researcher, in their use of capsulations, in their recounting of personal experiences as they read, and in their use of predicting as a strategy. Non-proficient readers did not respond often while participating in this research.

All readers exhibited the same behaviors while reading; the differences seemed to be in their flexibility with the process. All readers used more strategies after schema instantiation than before; all recalled more information after schema instantiation than before.

Cueing into the macrostructure was a key to comprehension and to retrieval in this particular reading passage. Readers who succeeded were operating from more of a top-down reading model, interactive yes, but most definitely paying attention to the overall structure.

READING COMPREHENSION: AN ANALYSIS FOR DEVELOPMENTAL READING PROGRAMS IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Order No. 8114898

WHITT, MARY FRANCES, ED.D. *The University of Alabama*, 1980. 151pp.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the skill of comprehension within a developmental reading program and to determine if reading comprehension showed significant gains when a developmental reading course emphasized the skill of comprehension. Three reading skill areas were analyzed.

The population for this study included entering freshman students at Alabama State University who were administered the Nelson-Denny Reading Test and enrolled in the developmental reading program. Participating freshman students comprised 14 class sections of developmental reading and formed the experimental and control groups for the study. The experimental group was composed of seven sections of developmental reading with a total of 102 students. This group received instruction based upon a comprehension emphasis approach. The control group consisted of seven sections of developmental reading with a total of 102 students. This group received instruction based upon a skills approach with no emphasis upon a particular skill.

Three null hypothesis were formulated to determine the variability of test scores on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test for differences in total reading, vocabulary, and comprehension between experimental and control groups. The determination to accept or reject the three null hypothesis of the study was based upon an analysis of variance on the pretest and posttest data obtaind from reading scores on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test. The p .05 level of significance was used as the acceptable level of probability for the statistical procedure.

The data is reported in three parts each dealing with that which was computed for the particular null hypothesis being tested. The three null hypotheses were the following: (Ho_1) No significant differences in total reading gain, as indicated by the Nelson-Denny Reading Test data, will be found between those students who received comprehension emphasis instruction (experimental group) and those students who did not receive comprehension emphasis instruction (control group). (Ho_2) No significant differences in vocabulary gain, as indicated by the Nelson-Denny Reading Test data, will be found between those students who received comprehension emphasis instruction (experimental group) and those students who did not receive comprehension emphasis instruction (control group). (Ho_3) No significant differences in comprehension gain, as indicated by the Nelson-Denny Reading Test data, will be found between those students who received comprehension emphasis instruction (experimental group) and those students who did not receive comprehension emphasis instruction (control group).

A summary of the statistical analysis of the first null hypothesis revealed that there was a significant difference between the two groups. The first null hypothesis (Ho_1) was rejected. An analysis of the second null hypothesis found no significant difference between the two groups. The second null hypothesis (Ho_2) was accepted. The third null hypothesis (Ho_3) was rejected when a significant difference was found between the groups.

The following conclusions were based upon the findings. (1) An analysis of the data and presentation of the findings revealed that in total reading, the experimental and control groups made significant gains. This improvement in the reading skills by both groups was probably due to three variables, student interest in the developmental reading course, academic ability, and the instructional process (2) Both groups made significant improvement in the vocabulary skill. (3) The experimental group made significantly greater gains than the control group in the skill of comprehension which was the major focus of this study.

Although the initial comprehension scores were lower for the experimental group than for the control group, higher scores and greater gains were made by the experimental group. It may be concluded that a comprehension emphasis procedure could improve all the reading skills and, more specifically, the skill of comprehension, to a much greater extent.

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